

April 21, 2005

PRESENT: Dr. Charles W. Curry, Chairman
Charles C. Schooley, Vice Chairman
Bruce M. Bowman
Kitra A. Shiflett
Larry C. Howdyshell
Betty Jo Hamilton
Mark Grove
William Bashaw
Garland Martin
Larry Shiflett
Clay Hewitt
Dale L. Cobb
Beatrice B. Cardellicchio

OTHERS PRESENT: Kay Frye

ABSENT: None

VIRGINIA: Meeting of the Agricultural Task Force Committee held on Thursday, April 21, 2005, at 7:00 P.M., in the County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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Chairman Curry asked how many committee members attended the Purchase of Development Rights seminar?

Chairman Curry stated that four committee members attended the seminar and hopefully after our session the committee could discuss the information they learned from the seminar.

Chairman Curry stated that he hopes to plan out the future meetings. He stated that he has had a number of speakers call him and want to address this group. He stated that the report the Board of Supervisors is expecting is starting to dwell on his mind.

Chairman Curry stated that at this meeting the committee was asked to pick five items from the:

1. Known Problems, Threats, Issues in Augusta County Preservation and Promotion of Agriculture
2. Information, Data, and Resources to be Explored
3. Action Options for the Task Force.

He indicated we would then prioritize these lists.

Chairman Curry stated that he has left out the Opportunities to Preserve and Promote Agriculture and the Strategies and Tools lists for a later meeting.

Chairman Curry stated that now that the committee knows the agenda for this meeting, does anyone have a motion to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2005 meeting?

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Mr. Shiflett stated that this has been the third time that something that he has said was incorrect in the minutes. He stated that he did not say the Service Authority makes it easy to develop. He stated that he would like to change Service Authority to Community Development on page three.

Mr. Bowman stated that he would like to make a change to page one because Rockingham County is number two in poultry in the nation.

Mr. Bowman moved that the minutes be approved with a word correction on page one and page three.

Ms. Shiflett seconded the motion, which was carried by a unanimous vote.

Mr. Shiflett stated that Community Development hired Sandi Scannelli to get the brainstorming items changed to the way that they wanted them as well as to omit some information including Exclusive Agriculture land that is being subdivided. Mr. Shiflett stated that what he said about easy subdividing is not on this list.

Chairman Curry stated that now is the time if anything was left off to add it to each of the lists before the committee prioritized them.

Mr. Shiflett stated that Community Development is for development and that is why his idea was left off.

Chairman Curry stated that was not the intent of the exercise.

Mr. Bashaw asked if another sheet could be added to the wall for any additions to the brainstorming list.

Mr. Hewitt stated that he has been listening a lot. He stated that this committee is not a zoning board. He stated that the number of housing developments done would not improve agriculture one bit. He stated that this committee should be looking at improving the profitability of agriculture.

Mr. Shiflett stated that he would like to add stop rapid subdivision of Exclusive Agriculture land to the Known Problems list.

Mr. Bashaw stated that something radical has to happen by the Board of Supervisors in the County to enhance the income of farms.

Mr. Hewitt stated that the net increase is still the same and it did not do much for him.

Mr. Howdyshell stated that the land use value went down 40% and the productive agriculture land also went down. He stated that land use went down 40% and the forest land went up 20%. He stated that they have to be careful as to what we do because Loudon County did something drastic and look at where they are now.

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Mr. Bashaw stated that land is going for incredible prices.

Chairman Curry stated that he is interested in seeing how the prioritizing task before this committee will turn out.

Chairman Curry stated that you all have your printed lists in front of you. He asked if there was anything the group would like to add?

Mr. Bashaw stated that he would like to add loss of historic sites in rural areas.

Vice Chairman Schooley stated that he would like to add that land values are not based on agriculture products but on development potential.

Each member of the committee prioritized the Known Problem list.

Chairman Curry stated that there were three threats tied for the number one spot. He stated that they are Loss of Productive Agricultural Land; Economic Viability of Farming; and Capital Investment Required. He stated that the other items of interest were: Pressure from Non-compatible Uses; Farmers Die Without Replacement/Aging Farmers; and Rapid Subdivision of Exclusive Agriculture Land.

Ms. Hamilton stated that the committee needs to find a program that addresses the farmers dieing without a replacement.

Mr. Bashaw stated that the farmers have to make sure that they have productive sons and daughters to farm.

Chairman Curry stated that the state of Virginia did have legislation addressing the issue.

Mr. Bowman stated that the Farm Bureau has a good program.

Ms. Hamilton stated that 4H has a program that if a youngster wants to farm but does not have any land, 4H sets them up with a farmer to help them.

Chairman Curry asked Ms. Cardellicchio if she could rank and un-rank the items on the brainstorming lists.

Chairman Curry stated that keeping the problems and threats in mind he asked the committee to address the Information, Data, and Resources list.

Chairman Curry asked if there were any additional items to be added to the list?

There being none, Chairman Curry asked the group to proceed.

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Mr. Howdysell asked if How much does agriculture do for Augusta County/State; What are the \$\$ figures; and Create an economic profile of the Augusta County farmer/farm would go together?

Ms. Hamilton stated that if you look at the big picture you will get the individual information.

Mr. Shiflett stated that a lot of people will not want to give out their net worth.

Chairman Curry stated that the committee would keep both items separate.

Chairman Curry stated that the two top items were National Programs Working in Other Counties and How much money is the County willing to spend to pursue this. He stated then came County plans for development, i.e. Toyota; Prototype of development desired by the County; How much does agriculture do for Augusta County/State; Where are the \$\$ figures; and Cost of services required by farm and non-farm households.

Chairman Curry asked staff to start working on the top priorities, which were the 1. National Programs 2. How much does agriculture do for Augusta County/State 3. Cost of services required by farm and non-farm households.

Chairman Curry asked if there were some items to add on to the Action Options list?

Ms. Hamilton stated that some of the items the committee already did.

Chairman Curry stated that he looks at that as a benefit.

Mr. Bowman stated that Review PDR plans in place elsewhere like Rockbridge and Find out where areas are getting PDR money should be combined.

Mr. Bashaw asked what does this list really mean?

Chairman Curry stated that these are items the committee will do.

Chairman Curry asked the committee members to prioritize the Action Options list.

Chairman Curry stated that the items that the committee thought were important was: Review Augusta County Ordinances; Have a speaker (farmer) from an area where a plan has been implemented (an area with a good plan and an area with an ineffective plan); Review PDR plans in place elsewhere – like Rockbridge and find out where areas are getting PDR money; Hold a public meeting for input; Research all strategies on the strategy list; and Brag about what farmers do and contribute to the County.

Chairman Curry stated that the committee has reviewed the Augusta County ordinances already but still may have questions as they move forward.

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Chairman Curry stated that staff needs to find someone that has a good and a bad plan to come and speak to this committee.

Mr. Bowman stated that he had a dot next to the Review Augusta County Ordinances because he thought the committee should make suggestions to the Board of Supervisors on what to consider in the Ordinances.

Chairman Curry stated that the committee was not too big on travel. He stated that the subject only had four dots.

Chairman Curry asked the committee members to look back at the problems and make sure that they have the resources and data that they need to address all of the items.

Chairman Curry stated that there is nothing under information that would define the loss of productive agriculture land.

Ms. Shiflett stated that revising Ordinances would be part of that.

Mr. Shiflett stated that listening to the people in Rockingham County could also do that.

Mr. Howdysshell stated that looking back at the Comprehensive Plan and seeing the history of agriculture land could do that as well.

Ms. Shiflett stated that there is nothing for economic viability on the list that will address that issue. Chairman Curry stated that maybe staff could get us a speaker on that subject.

Ms. Hamilton suggested Dr. Kohl from Virginia Tech because he is a wonderful speaker and he should be able to address that issue.

Chairman Curry stated that with the capital investment issue maybe the committee would need to speak with bankers and creditors.

Chairman Curry stated that Rockingham County wanted to create a core group that was from the private sector. He stated that a core group might also address some of these issues.

Mr. Shiflett stated that he does not see where the County can do a whole lot.

Ms. Hamilton stated that the price of land is based on development potential. She stated that if the development potential is lower than the price of land will be lower.

Mr. Howdysshell stated that this committee needs to educate the Board of Supervisors.

Chairman Curry stated that maybe there could be some incentives for new agriculture businesses.

Ms. Hamilton stated that the County helped ASR.

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Mr. Cobb stated that the County backed the loans on the money for ASR which helped keep that industry here in Augusta County. He stated that there are incentives offered to some of the new industry.

Ms. Hamilton stated that the County made a good decision about ASR. She stated that the County needs to decide how important farming is to the County.

Mr. Howdysell stated that the committee should see the letter that goes in with the budget highlighting the importance of agriculture in the County.

Mr. Hewitt stated that development affects agriculture.

Ms. Hamilton stated that this business is a business of profitability. She stated that if farmers are not making money they need to farm another product. She stated that farmers need to look at where the market is. She stated that she is the President of the Virginia Cattle Feeders Association. She stated that the County can help young farmers get established. She stated that if they do not have an agriculture education, they should get one. She stated that young people are good resources for farming.

Chairman Curry stated that the committee is most interested in economic viability. He asked staff to work on a holding a public meeting and finding a speaker to speak to the committee. He stated that someone suggested Dr. Kohl to speak to the committee. He asked the committee what they wanted to do first?

Mr. Hewitt stated that Exclusive Agriculture in development is a major problem.

Mr. Shiflett stated that the land next to him was subdivided. He stated that right now there are six houses but by next year there could be twelve.

Ms. Frye stated that the legal loopholes were found in subdividing.

Mr. Shiflett stated that he may very well want to develop his land. He stated that he does not want his farm next to a bunch of residential houses.

Mr. Cobb stated that Augusta County has a minimum one-acre size for a lot. He stated that the County has enough growth to qualify under the State Code to eliminate the family member exception clause from the Ordinance.

Mr. Bowman stated that the Board of Supervisors might want to tighten up the loopholes in the Subdivision Ordinance.

Mr. Cobb stated that staff will rank the items from the brainstorming session for the committee. He stated that the committee talked about the rapid subdivision of agriculture land, therefore, staff can go back ten years and look at the land rezoned. He stated that we can list ideas on the

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subdividing of land and the committee could give their recommendation to the Board of Supervisors on amending the Subdivision Ordinance. He stated that in the meantime staff will try to get Dr. Kohl to speak to the committee one night. He stated that staff will look at PDRs from other Counties.

Ms. Hamilton asked if the committee would go in to a larger room when Dr. Kohl came to speak. She stated that he is a good speaker and the committee should utilize him.

Chairman Curry stated that the committee should go through the Ordinance, have Dr. Kohl come in to speak, and have someone come in and speak on their PDR. He stated that he will leave it to the staff's discretion as to what the committee does first. He stated that the committee should use the Boardroom and publicize the meeting and invite the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission members.

Chairman Curry asked Ms. Cardellicchio to type up on a blank page the word Findings, Recommendations, and Information and when the committee would like to add items to anyone of those pages they can do so.

Chairman Curry asked if anyone has a list of suggested speakers?

Ms. Shiflett stated that the Chairman of the DEQ in Harrisonburg, Gary Flory, may be a good speaker for the group.

Mr. Bashaw stated that it will be nice to have public input on the meetings.

Mr. Bowman stated that speaking with the public should be a meeting that takes place as soon as possible.

Mr. Bashaw stated that the public meeting should be advertised so the committee should have enough time to publicize it.

Ms. Hamilton stated that maybe the meeting should take place before the end of the school year.

Chairman Curry stated that maybe the committee should wait until August or September for the meeting on the public input because then that will be the beginning of the school year.

Mr. Bowman stated that when staff is getting information on the PDRs, Rockbridge is new in the process but maybe staff could get information on Virginia Beach's PDRs because they have been doing it for a while.

Ms. Hamilton stated that she spoke for some young farmers and she did a PowerPoint presentation on the information that the Task Force has done so far. She asked that Ms. Cardellicchio hold on to it so that if anyone needed it they could use it.

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Mr. Cobb mentioned that on May 21st Fauquier County will have their Piedmont Small Farm Festival.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Chairman